

Johns Hopkins University

**DEVELOPMENT OF A CAREER LADDER FOR A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH
ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT**

by
Brittney Stewart

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Abstract

Research administration is a relatively new field that performs a wide array of duties to support the research enterprise from start to finish. As with many new fields, there are inconsistencies in what education, experience, and work duties are required to fulfill a specific job title. This is just one reason why career ladders and descriptions are essential for institutions to implement. In addition to this, studies have shown that career ladders can help improve employee satisfaction by enabling them to see where their career can take them and when they should expect a promotion. With this in mind, the author created a career ladder for pre-award and post-award research administration positions at a private university.

By completing this Capstone Project, the author created a career ladder for eight pre-award and post-award titles at the university and developed a short summary of each position to be posted on the university's website. These products and recommendations to review and update the current job titles will enable the university to increase transparency, improve employee satisfaction, and provide other resources for those in HR and hiring managers to reference. The career ladder can be improved upon and updated as needed and be applied to other areas at the university.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background.

Research administration is a relatively new field working to refine its place within the realm of research. As with many new fields, there can be ambiguity and inconsistency regarding what education is needed, the job responsibilities, and even what to title a specific job position. When a new grad or seasoned worker goes on the search for a new job, they have to know what titles to search for so that the jobs match their education, interests, and skillset; that is where recruitment for research administration becomes tricky.

Since the titles for research administration positions can range from the vague “research administrator” to the more specific “grant specialist” or “compliance officer,” it can confuse those trying to apply for employment in the field. Even if the applicants are already in the field, how can they know what their next career move should be if they do not know what other career titles exist? Suppose a university wants to recruit the most qualified candidates. To do that, it needs to make an effort to define how research administration fits within the institution and develop a career ladder to provide a clear path for its employees.

Therefore, this Capstone Project will address the education, skills, and job responsibilities of research administration job titles in order to create a career ladder for a private midwestern university. For privacy reasons, the author cannot disclose the university's exact name, so the author will simply refer to it as “the university” throughout this paper. Specifically, the focus will be on pre-award/post-award positions within basic science departments to lay out what titles are at the university and how someone can move into each title. This ladder can be utilized by recruitment specialists and other human resources

personnel when assisting with job transfers, determining what titles hiring managers want to create a job posting for, and for career services specialists to help employees determine where they want to go in their career.

1.2. State of the Problem.

Currently, this university does not have a career ladder, or any research administration job descriptions posted on its website. Job descriptions are only available to those in the Human Resources-Recruitment department. That makes it difficult for anyone to determine what titles are at the university, how someone can progress through their career in the field, or for hiring managers to determine what position they need to post. The university has created career ladders and short job descriptions for other departments, such as basic research but has not done so for research administration.

When a department needs to hire a new employee, hiring managers waste valuable time consulting back and forth with recruitment via email to determine what title needs posting. First, the hiring manager will describe what skills they are looking for, and then recruitment sends back a suggested job title. After considering the suggested title, the hiring manager will respond, saying that the suggested position does not meet their department's education requirements or needs. Hence, recruitment sends another job title, hoping that it is more suitable to their requirements. All of this can take multiple days until everyone agrees on what title is needed.

Career services specialists advise employees on how they can advance through their career by suggesting job titles they can apply to. The university's career services specialists currently use a generic career ladder generated by Zippia.com to advise research administrators

on the next steps in their careers. The issue with this is that the career ladder does not match up with the university's job titles and minimum requirements. Each of these problems could be mitigated with the development of a career ladder for research administrators.

1.3. Project Question.

This Capstone serves to answer three questions:

1. What are the job titles available at the university, and what is the description/summary for each position?
2. What are the minimum qualifications of each position, including any education, certifications, and skills necessary to be considered for hire?
3. What positions are entry, mid, or senior-level and how does an employee progress from one position to the next.

1.4. Project Objectives.

This Capstone Project serves to create a career ladder to be used as a resource by University hiring managers, recruitment department, and career services department. To complete this project, the objectives are as follows:

1. Compile a list of all currently available research administration titles at the university and their requirements.
2. Create a list of job titles with a summary and minimum requirements to be posted on the university research administration webpage.
3. Develop a career ladder describing the progression from entry-level to senior-level positions at the university used by the human resources and career services department.

1.5. Significance.

The significance of this project is three-fold. First, creating a career ladder will streamline the recruitment process by cutting down on emailing between the hiring manager and recruiters to determine the correct job title, enabling positions to be posted and filled more quickly. Second, this resource will allow for the career services specialist to reference the institution's specific job titles instead of an online generic career path when advising employees on how to progress through their careers. That will make it easier for employees to understand what their career options are within the university and what titles to search for on the job board. Lastly, this resource will allow for the creation of a separate web page to showcase what jobs are at the university and how they compare to each other. This would allow external job seekers to determine which positions they may be a good fit for and enable them to navigate the job board more efficiently. Overall, this project will benefit multiple departments and serve as a guide for other departments lacking a career path within the university.

1.6. Exclusions and Limitations.

This project will serve as a guide specifically for job positions at this particular University. The requirements and job descriptions within the career ladder will be specific to the university and may not be applicable to other institutions. Although the university has research administration positions in compliance, this project will only address pre/post-award research administration positions in basic science departments. The final career ladder produced will reference titles and requirements of job titles currently available as of September

2020; if changes to titles or their requirements occur, then the career ladder will need to be updated.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of Literature Review.

This Capstone Project was to develop a career ladder for the pre/post-award research administration positions at the university. The field of research administration is broad and relatively new, making it difficult for individuals to know what research administrators do or how to enter the field to become one. The literature review will provide an overview of research administration and how current positions are titled and their corresponding responsibilities. Also, the literature will describe the potential benefits of creating a career path.

2.2. Details of Review.

Research administration is relatively new with the development of the field dating back to only 1948 when the federal government decided to start investing in academic research, thus discovering the need for an organization to control and regulate multiple research studies.¹ The field has continued to grow and progress but still lacks specificity regarding job titles and the corresponding requirements. A study done analyzing trends in research administration positions at 187 different institutions found that the number of these positions posted tripled in 2010 and continue to steadily increase.² Position titles posted also varied greatly, with there being “44 unique nouns” describing just 13 simple titles such as “grant writer” or “proposal developer.”³ Next, the education and experience qualifications also varied due to job titles and the responsibilities not being consistent.

¹ Phillip Myers and Marie Smith, "Research Administration In History: The Development Of OMB Circular A-110 Through Joseph Warner'S COGR Subcommittee, 1976-1979", *The Journal Of Research Administration* no. 2 (2008): 15.

² Michael Preuss et al., "Describing Research Development: A First Step", *Research Management Review* 23, no. 1 (2018): 8-17.

³ Ibid.

Education and experience requirements are often combined in job postings, where experience can substitute for education, which further complicates the issue. The Michael Preuss et al study looking at education requirements for multiple positions from 2010-2016 showed a trend in preferring advanced degrees. Of these same job positions that also required some level of experience, 68% listed a minimum of 3-5 years of experience needed to be considered⁴ for a position. As this study showcased, there are not yet consistent titles or requirements for research administration positions, and work still needs to be done if there is to be universal titling and requirements across the board.

Research administration is a necessary profession in order to ensure that research studies are functioning correctly. Although these positions are necessary, there has not been much research to show its importance in higher education institutions objectively. This sentiment is echoed in the paper by Timothy and colleagues, which still applicable in 2020:

Very few empirical studies have been done on research administration. In 1986, Hensley noted, "it is widely acknowledged that research support personnel are essential...to the achievement of the specific missions of postsecondary institutions, and to American technological leadership, yet this vital group's value to science is largely unrecognized in comprehensive studies; and the field is generally ignored by disciplinary associations in their assessment of the 20 Volume XXXVIII, Number 1, 2007 *The Journal of Research Administration Science and Academic Infrastructure*" (pp. 47, 48). Hensley's statement holds true in this century, over 20 years later.⁵

Without standardized requirements for research administration jobs, universities are allowed to develop their own specific titles and requirements for each position, making it

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Timothy Atkinson, Diane Gilleland and T. Gregory Barrett, "The Dimensions Of Influence On Research Administrator Behavior: Toward A Theoretical Model Of Research Administration As A Public Service Profession", *The Journal Of Research Administration* no. 1 (2007): 19-20.

difficult for an individual to advance in their career. Some of the ways that have helped people advance in their careers include seeking out a mentor, asking questions, becoming certified, or furthering one's education.⁶ Mentors and career services specialists should have access to career ladders to advise a research administrator best. However, not all universities have developed a career path for their research administration personnel.

The time it takes to develop a university-specific career ladder would be beneficial due to its well-documented impact on career satisfaction. Universities, as well as other employers, want to retain their qualified staff. An analysis of data over a 10-year time frame showed that career satisfaction in any field increased when a promotion was received within the last two years or if there is a possibility of receiving a promotion within two years.⁷ Providing a career path can give employees an idea of when their experience and education should yield a promotion and thereby increase their career satisfaction.

2.3. Applicability of Literature Review.

This literature review demonstrates the necessity for a career ladder for the university's research administration positions. Without a standardized classification system for research administration titles and requirements, it becomes even more important to create a career path so current and potential employees can apply to positions they are qualified for and know when they should seek a promotion. Employees being able to see their career potential will yield greater career satisfaction and enable the university to retain employees' long term.

⁶ Angela Yost, "Research Administration: Navigating A Diverse And Rewarding Career Path", *NCURA Magazine* no. 6 (2015): 36-37.

⁷ VASILIOS KOSTEAS, "Job Satisfaction And Promotions", *Industrial Relations: A Journal Of Economy And Society* 50, no. 1 (2011): 190-194, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-232X.2010.00630.x>.

Knowing the benefits to a career ladder will show universities that investing time into creating one will be well worth it, which is especially crucial to a field like research administration that lacks empirical research to show how necessary it is to research institutions.

Chapter 3. Need(s) Assessment

3.1. Need(s) Assessment.

Career paths are utilized by various employers from higher education institutions to industry corporations, in fields ranging from the medical sciences to human services. While the university has implemented a career ladder for other professions such as basic and clinical research positions, it has not implemented one for research administration positions. The lack of this resource has caused delays in recruiting efforts, prevented employees from knowing how they can progress at the university without seeking help directly from a busy recruiter or supervisor, and left potential new employees unable to determine what type of careers are available at the university. The development of this resource would enable the university to increase transparency to internal and external employees, help streamline the job posting process, and improve the career services center's ability to advise research administration professionals.

3.2. Metrics.

Besides consulting with university employees regarding establishing a career ladder, the university's main website and "Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research" web page were searched to determine no prior existing resources available. Keywords searched for included, "career path", "career ladder", "career track", "research administration", "research admin", and "research administrator".

3.3. Sources.

The Career Development Specialist in Human Resources was consulted to verify that no current resource existed and to determine that there is a need for a career ladder. Additionally, a Human Resource employee who works on research administration positions was consulted to determine that this resource would benefit their work at the university. Prior email correspondence with research administration employees was referenced to verify that there was uncertainty regarding how one would progress in the field.

Chapter 4. Project Description

4.1. Discussion of Project Elements.

The first element of this project included the creation of a career ladder for the pre/post-award research administration positions at a private university. The benefits of a custom career ladder have been well documented and assist employees with mapping out their careers. It can also aid career services specialists in advising employees wanting to make a career change. After consulting with a career services specialist and searching the university's website, it was determined that there was no career ladder currently available to internal or external applicants. The university had been using a generic career ladder from Zippia.com, which does not align with the actual titles and requirements of job positions at the university. A step-by-step process is provided on how the career ladder was developed, beginning with determining what research administration titles are offered, sorting out the pre/post-award specific positions, and organizing them based on the minimum education and experience required. These steps enabled the author to create a visual representation of how to progress from one job to another.

The project's final element was to compile a summary of the job descriptions and minimum requirements to be posted on the university's web page, similar to what is already provided for basic research positions. This will enable anyone from internal employees to external applicants to quickly view what jobs are available within the university. For external applicants, it could determine whether they see the university as a good fit for a long-term career or if the position they were searching for is even an option.

While this project was specifically developed to benefit the research administration department, it may also be used as a template for other university departments. By following the methods provided within this capstone project, other departments will be able to apply it to their unique job titles and create their own career ladders.

Chapter 5. Methodology

5.1. Methodology Overview.

The development of this career ladder required consulting with a career services specialist and research administration recruiter to determine that this source was not already available and would benefit the university. Next, the author searched the university's main website and the website for the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research using keywords to assure the author that no similar resource already existed. After such a review, it was concluded that there was no career ladder for pre/post-award research administration positions at the university.

To begin developing the career ladder, a spreadsheet of job codes was referenced to determine any active job codes that could be used by the university. After collecting a list of the active job codes for pre/post-award positions, a job description folder was accessed to compile all job descriptions and minimum requirements. Each job could then be separated by how they relate to the other and organized from entry to more senior-level positions. Once organized, the final career ladder was created while ensuring it is easy to follow and understand.

The final product produced was a list containing brief job summaries and minimum requirements of each pre/post-award position. This list could be placed on the university's webpage to provide a quick overview of potential positions external applicants or current employees could apply. Together, the list of job summaries and the career ladder would be publicly available to anyone who views the webpage. The resources would also be available for

career services specialists to reference when assisting employees in advancing within their current field at the university.

5.2. Project Design and Discussion.

This project's design was to meet the needs of this specific university, which had not implemented a career track for the research administration department. To determine that the need had not already been met, the author spoke with a career services specialist and a research administration recruiter. After those discussions, it was determined that neither of them had access to a career ladder and only utilized a generic one through a career advising website. This was followed up by conducting a keyword search on the university's main website and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor of Research webpage using the keywords "career path," "career ladder," "career track," "research administration," "research admin," and "research administrator." The keyword search did not produce any career ladder or career guidance for research administration positions.

5.2.1. Determining Active Job Titles.

The author searched through a spreadsheet listing all of the university's active job titles to ensure that the final career ladder and job summary list created were specific to this university. The spreadsheet was filtered by the job family of "research administrative support" to determine all research administration titles that the university may use. The final step was to remove any compliance or regulatory job titles since this project specifically looked at pre/post-award positions. If the author was unsure if the title was compliance or pre/post-award, it was not removed until its job description could be reviewed.

5.2.2. Reviewing Job Descriptions.

After compiling the list of job titles, the corresponding job descriptions were reviewed. The author read over each job summary to see if positions had similar responsibilities and what minimum education and experience were required to be hired into a position. The information was then used to determine which jobs were entry, mid, or senior level and how they related to one other regarding job responsibilities. This allowed the author to organize the positions for the career ladder.

5.2.3. Creation of the Career Ladder.

Once the job positions are organized based on minimum requirements and how they relate regarding job responsibilities, the author could begin creating the career ladder. The product produced should be a visual representation of how an individual can move between each job. To do this, the entry-level positions were placed on the left-hand side of the page leading up to the most senior-level position on the right-hand side of the page connected by arrows. If a position has similar education and experience requirements but was not directly related in job duties, the two positions were placed next to each other, connected by a dotted arrow. A solid arrow indicates a promotion or advancement up the career ladder, while a dotted arrow indicates a lateral transfer. Each job title was listed with the minimum requirements required as well.

5.2.4. Creation of Job Summary Webpage.

To learn more about each position on the career ladder, a job summary web page was created to provide a brief synopsis of each position. The summaries were

listed with senior-level positions at the top of the page leading down to the most entry-level positions at the bottom; similar to how the basic research summaries are listed. Together these resources provide an overview of career progression in pre/post-award positions at the university.

Chapter 6. Project Results and Discussion

6.1. Job Title Results.

Upon reviewing all active job titles, it was determined that there were sixteen positions in the category of research administrative support. Narrowing down these sixteen titles allowed the author to meet the first research question of determining what research administration job titles were at the university. The titles could be divided into three categories: pre/post-award, compliance, and general/hybrid. Eight of the sixteen positions fell into the pre/post-award category and were used to develop the career ladder. The positions included were Grant Specialist I, Grants/Budget Specialist, Grant Assistant III, Grant Assistant II, Grant Assistant I, Senior Grants/Budget Specialist, Senior Grant Specialist, and Grant Specialist II.

6.2. Minimum Requirements Results.

To answer the author's second research question regarding minimum requirements, the job descriptions were reviewed to determine an order from entry-level to senior-level positions based on education and work experience required to be hired into each position. Concerning education requirements, three of the eight positions only required the equivalent of a high school diploma meaning a high school diploma or GED. The remaining five positions required the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, meaning an applicant needs to either have a bachelor's degree or four years of relevant experience to substitute for the degree. The final minimum requirement was work experience which ranged from one to two years for the most entry-level positions to nine years for the most senior level pre/post-award positions.

6.3. Career Ladder Organization and Discussion.

Determining the job titles, minimum requirements, and reviewing the job duties allowed the author to arrange the pre/post-award positions from most entry-level to the most senior-level jobs. This led to the creation of the career ladder, as shown in Figure 1 below.

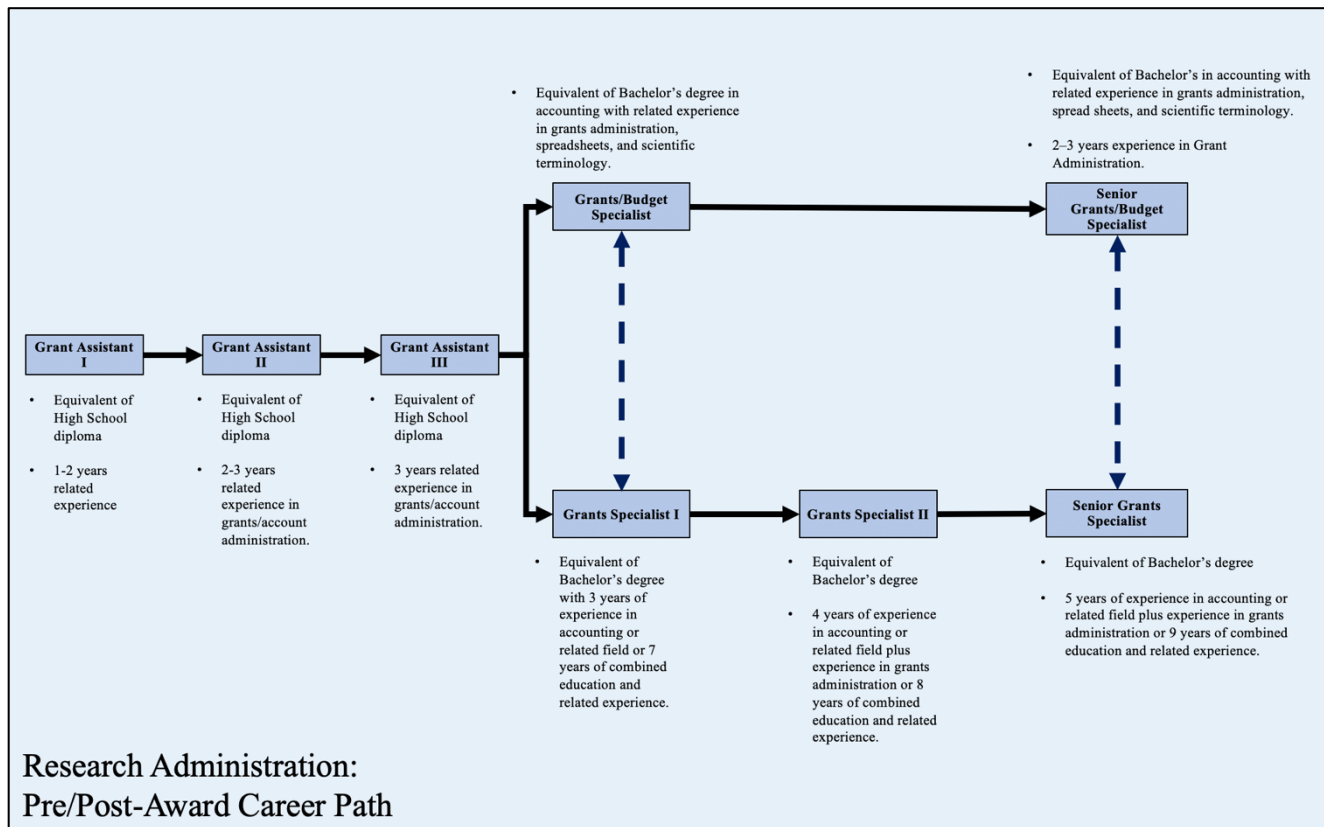


Figure 1. The University's Career Ladder⁸

As represented in Figure 1, the most entry-level position at the university is the Grant Assistant I, which requires the equivalent of a high school diploma and one to two years of related experience. After gaining another one or two years of experience, an individual could be promoted into Grant Assistant II, followed by a promotion into the Grant assistant III position

⁸ Anonymous. "Active Job Codes, Titles, and Descriptions". (1994-2005).

once they have at least three years of experience in grants/account administration. A solid arrow represents a promotion or steps forward in the career path.

From the Grant Assistant III position, an individual can decide between becoming a Grants/Budget Specialist or a Grants Specialist I. If they want to become a Grants/Budget Specialist, they would need an equivalent of a bachelor's degree in accounting. Furthermore, this would require having an accounting degree or having four years of related work experience in grants administration, spreadsheets, and scientific terminology. The last promotion for the Grants/Budget career path would be to a Senior Grants/Budget Specialist, which requires the same education and work experience as the Grants/Budget Specialist but with an additional two to three years of grant administration experience.

If a Grants/Budget Specialist decides to take a job as a Grants Specialist I, it would be considered a lateral transfer, as shown by the dotted arrow in Figure 1. A lateral transfer means that it is neither a promotion nor a demotion, and no pay increase is required. The requirements of this Grants Specialist I position are different in that it requires a total of seven years of education and work experience even though it is in the same job grade as the Grants/Budget Specialist position that only requires the equivalent of four years of accounting experience. An individual could then be promoted into the Grants Specialist II position, which requires eight years of relevant education/experience or the equivalent of a bachelor's degree and four years of accounting experience. The most senior-level position in the grant specialist career path is a Senior Grants Specialist, which requires a bachelor's and five years of related experience or a total of 9 years of relevant education/experience.

The current minimum requirements do not specifically address advanced degrees such as a Master of Science Degree (M.S.) in Research Administration but are covered under the “relevant education/work experience” caveat in each minimum requirement. An individual with a bachelors and M.S in Research Administration would equate to having 6 years of relevant education or experience. Certification such as a Clinical Research Associate (CRA) or Society of Clinical Research Associates (SOCRA) certifications do not count towards the minimum requirements of a position but may be listed under a preferred requirements section where a hiring manager lists the qualities of an ideal candidate.

As shown through Figure 1 and the explanation of the career ladder, the author determined types of pre/post-award positions available at the university, how they relate to one another regarding a promotion or lateral transfer, and the minimum requirements of each. The career ladder development allowed the author to create a list of the available pre/post-award positions and the job summaries to be listed on the university's web page.

6.4. Job Summary Webpage.

One of the three objectives for this project was to create a job summary list that could be displayed on the university's webpage, similar to what is already done for the basic research positions. The job summaries were listed with the most senior-level positions on the top of the page leading down to the most entry-level position at the bottom, as shown in Figure 2. Each position was listed with a short summary and the qualifications needed to be hired into the position. For example, the Grant Assistant I position summary “assists with processing university contracts and grants and establishes the accounts for each grant.” In contrast, a Grant Assistant II position summary is “partners with the study's Principal Investigator on grant

and study preparation, reporting, and recording.” The summaries are broad to give a general idea of what a position would be responsible for and allow internal and external applicants to view all of the university's potential pre/post-award positions.

Research Administration: Pre/Post-Award Careers

Senior Grants/Budget Specialist: Position is responsible for the more complex aspects of grant management and may supervise one or more grant assistants and specialists. This position may also oversee center grants.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelors in accounting with related experience in grants administration, spreadsheets, and scientific terminology and two to three years experience in Grant Administration.

Senior Grants Specialist: Handles complex grant activities and acts as a lead specialist. Coordinates budgets and grants, handles information systems, and departmental administrative duties. May also serve as a group leader for other specialists and assistants.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree with five years of experience in accounting or related field plus experience in grants administration or nine years of combined education and related experience.

Grants Specialist II: Performs pre/post-award activities in addition to payroll sourcing duties with minimal supervision.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree and four years of experience in accounting or related field plus experience in grants administration or eight years of combined education and related experience.

Grants/Budget Specialist: Position acts as a coordinator of contracts and budgets, including duties such as grant management, handling information systems and administration related to the department, and assists with other duties as necessary.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree in accounting with related experience in grants administration, spreadsheets, and scientific terminology.

Grants Specialist I: Assists with pre-award activities with moderate supervision and assists with post-award duties with significant supervision.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree with three years of experience in accounting or related field or seven years of combined education and related experience.

Grant Assistant III: As the head Grant Assistant, this position supervises other grant assistants and assists the Principal Investigator on grant and study preparations, reporting, and other duties relating to the grant process.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma and three years related experience in grants/account administration.

Grant Assistant II: Partners with the study's Principal Investigator on grant and study preparation, reporting, and recording.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma with 2-3 years related experience in grants/account administration.

Grant Assistant I: Assists with processing university contracts and grants and establishes the accounts for each grant.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma with 1-2 years related experience.

Figure 2. Website Summary of Positions⁹

⁹ IBID

Chapter 7. Recommendations and Discussion

7.1. Introduction.

The literature review showcased how implementing a career ladder would benefit the university and an employee's overall career satisfaction. By evaluating the job descriptions and the minimum requirements, the author developed a personalized career ladder and job summary list for this university. The products produced can be immediately implemented at the university for no cost and with little time investment. Along with the products, the author has further recommendations for how the university can benefit from this work.

7.2. Recommendations.

7.2.1. Recommendation 1: University-wide Implementation of Career Ladders for Research Administrators.

As previously stated, there are well-documented benefits to developing career ladders, but the university has not created one for research administration positions until the author created one. University employees should have access to a resource that allows them to see how their careers can progress and what qualifications they need to receive a promotion. The career ladder (Figure 1) shows what pre/post-award employees are available and how they relate to each other. Before its development, the career service specialists utilized a generic career ladder through Zippia.com, which did not align with the university's positions. Suppose the university does not want to make this available publicly online. In that case, it could be a resource for HR recruiters, hiring

managers, and career services specialists to utilize and share with employees at the discretion of HR leadership.

7.2.2. Recommendation 2: Career Services Specialists and HR Recruiters Should Utilize the Career Ladder for Recruitment and Retention of Research Administrators

It is recommended that the career services specialists and HR recruiters utilize the career ladder when advising employees on their potential career path or to explain to hiring managers how the positions relate to one another so they can decide what position they need to hire for their lab. The university should also specify when a promotion should be given if an employee obtains additional educational degrees or certifications. If an individual is hired into a position and then they finish their M.S. in Research Administration or obtain CRA certification while employed, then they should be eligible for a promotion or pay increase due to these accomplishments.

7.2.3. Recommendation 3: The Office of Human Resources Should Post a Research Administration Job Summary on the University Website.

Since research administration is a relatively new field, there are still no universal titles or qualifications for specific jobs. To attract the right candidates for a job, applicants need to know what positions are available and what education/experience they need to have to meet the job's minimum qualifications. By listing the job summary and corresponding qualifications, as shown in Figure 2, on the university's website, the university will increase transparency while assisting with recruitment efforts. A similar list was created for basic research positions, and it allows for applicants to quickly see

which jobs they may be a good fit for instead of searching through the hundreds of jobs on the job board website.

7.2.4. Recommendation 4: Human Resources and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research Should Make Changes to Job Descriptions and Minimum Qualifications for Research Administration Positions that are currently Used.

The career ladder and job summary list were created using the university's current job titles, job descriptions, and minimum requirements. Upon examination of the job descriptions, some have not been updated since 1995. To ensure the jobs are relevant to the work employees are doing, the job descriptions should be reviewed and updated. Additionally, minimum requirements may also need to be revised if job duties change or to prevent overlap. For example, the Grant Assistant II position requires 2-3 years of experience, meaning it overlaps the requirements for both the Grant Assistant I and Grant Assistant III position. Since the Grant Assistant III position performs a supervisory role, it would be beneficial to include a leadership experience requirement, like being the lead assistant on multiple projects, to delineate when a person should move into that position. Together, these recommendations would improve the university's pre/post-award positions' transparency and organization and serve as an example of how to apply the recommendations to other departments.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Providing a career path gives employees information on the timeline to their ideal job and when their experience and educational skills should yield a promotion. These factors have been shown to increase career satisfaction and enable the university to retain its long-term employees. Research administration is a newer field without standardized job titles and minimum requirements. These factors make having a customized career ladder even more critical for a university, so potential applicants know what jobs they want to apply for and current employees know their advancement options.

The questions posed by this Capstone Project were to determine the university's pre/post- award job titles/descriptions, a job's minimum requirements, and how an employee would progress from one job to another. By answering these questions, the author met the objectives of creating a career ladder and job summary list to be utilized by recruiters, career service specialists, and internal or external applicants, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Although there is research on a career ladder's benefits, the university has still not implemented one for the research administration department. This oversight led to delays when posting new jobs, employees not knowing what positions they could be promoted into, and the career service specialists using a generic career ladder that did not line up with the university's actual opportunities. The resources produced by this capstone project can be implemented at no cost and with little time investment on the university's part. In addition to these resources, the methodology provided will enable any department to create its own career ladder and job summary list.

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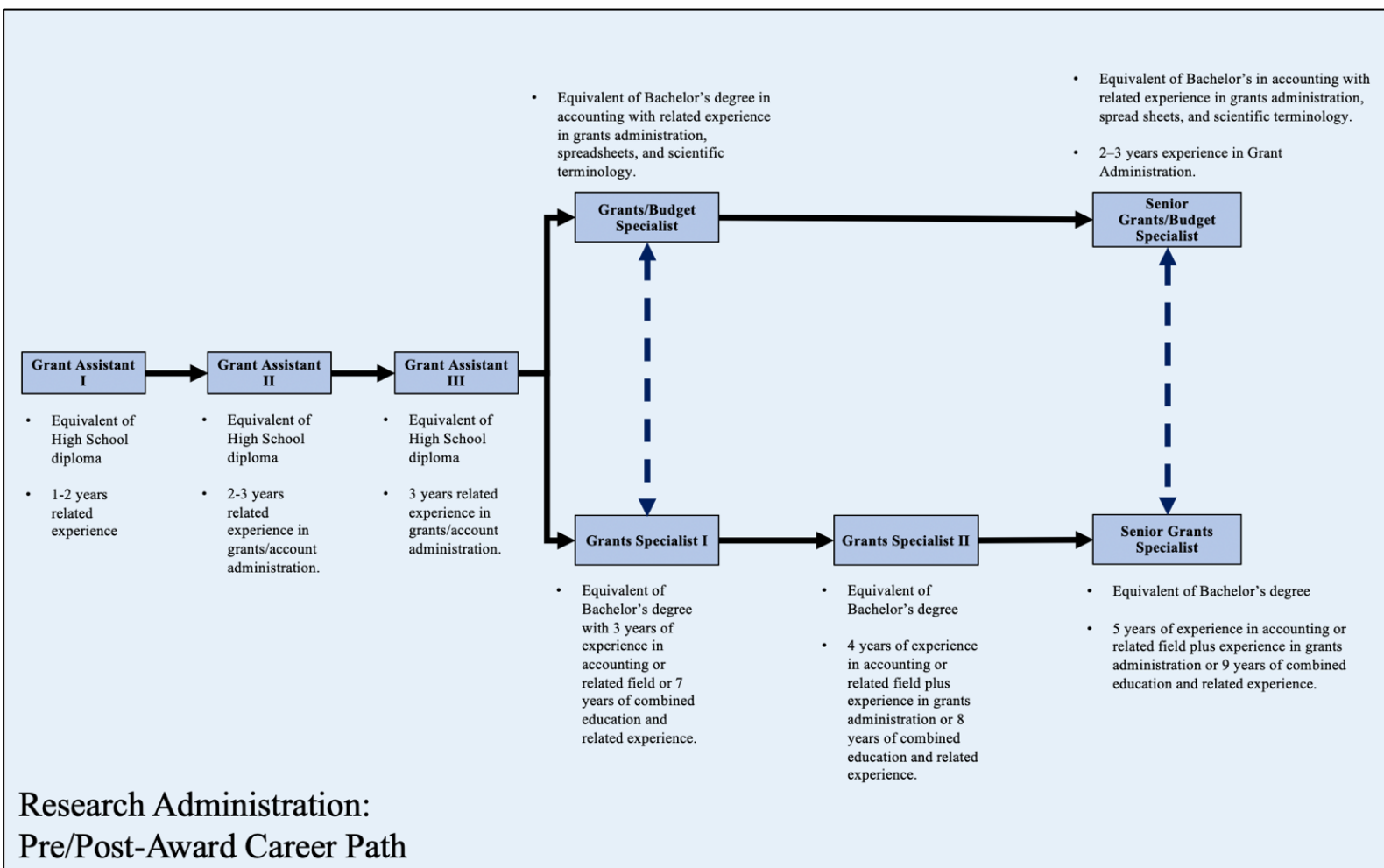
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Appendix 1: The University's Career Ladder¹⁰



¹⁰ Anonymous. "Active Job Codes, Titles, and Descriptions". (1994-2005).

Appendix 2: Website Summary of Positions¹¹

Research Administration: Pre/Post-Award Careers

Senior Grants/Budget Specialist: Position is responsible for the more complex aspects of grant management and may supervise one or more grant assistants and specialists. This position may also oversee center grants.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelors in accounting with related experience in grants administration, spreadsheets, and scientific terminology and two to three years experience in Grant Administration.

Senior Grants Specialist: Handles complex grant activities and acts as a lead specialist. Coordinates budgets and grants, handles information systems, and departmental administrative duties. May also serve as a group leader for other specialists and assistants.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree with five years of experience in accounting or related field plus experience in grants administration or nine years of combined education and related experience.

Grants Specialist II: Performs pre/post-award activities in addition to payroll sourcing duties with minimal supervision.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree and four years of experience in accounting or related field plus experience in grants administration or eight years of combined education and related experience.

Grants/Budget Specialist: Position acts as a coordinator of contracts and budgets, including duties such as grant management, handling information systems and administration related to the department, and assists with other duties as necessary.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree in accounting with related experience in grants administration, spreadsheets, and scientific terminology.

Grants Specialist I: Assists with pre-award activities with moderate supervision and assists with post-award duties with significant supervision.

Qualifications: Equivalent of Bachelor's degree with three years of experience in accounting or related field or seven years of combined education and related experience.

Grant Assistant III: As the head Grant Assistant, this position supervises other grant assistants and assists the Principal Investigator on grant and study preparations, reporting, and other duties relating to the grant process.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma and three years related experience in grants/account administration.

Grant Assistant II: Partners with the study's Principal Investigator on grant and study preparation, reporting, and recording.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma with 2-3 years related experience in grants/account administration.

Grant Assistant I: Assists with processing university contracts and grants and establishes the accounts for each grant.

Qualifications: Equivalent of High School diploma with 1-2 years related experience.

¹¹ IBID

Appendix 3: Short Biography of the Author

Brittney Stewart graduated from York College of Pennsylvania in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in biological sciences. Knowing she wanted to be in the research field but not work directly in a lab setting, she decided to pursue a research administration degree. In 2020, she earned her Master of Science in Research Administration from Johns Hopkins University, focusing on compliance, legal, and regulatory issues and administering and facilitating research programs. Throughout her education, she has finally discovered the career field she could see herself in the long term, which is human resources. She is currently a recruiting assistant for the Washington University in St. Louis. Brittney would eventually like to move up into a more senior role in HR recruitment or management at a research/medical school.